The Olympic flame will cover more than 21,000 km and will cross 46 American states. More than 11,500 torchbearers will take part in the relay over 65 days. Different means of transport will be used: car, plane, train, boat, skis, sled drawn by dogs and horses, snow motorbikes, skates, chariots, etc. For the first time, the Olympic flame will enter Alaska. It will also visit all the American cities that have hosted the Games; Atlanta in Georgia; Lake Placid in New York State; Los Angeles and Squaw Valley in California; and St Louis in Missouri. Each torchbearer will carry the flame for around 350 metres. The Olympic flame will cover 330 km every day on average, 12 hours a day. The relay will stop over at the end of each day for two major events. The relay will begin on 4 December 2001 in Atlanta, where the Olympic flame will burn for the first time on American soil. The flame will then embark on a long journey through different climates, featuring the sun and the beaches of Florida, the magnificent winter countryside of New England, the heart of the Mid-West with a stop off in Detroit, the deserts of the south west, the temperate north west and the unique beauty of Alaska. Throughout this journey, the 2002 Olympic Torch Relay sponsored by Coca-Cola and Chevrolet, will be a window to the passion and inspiration that is a feature of the communities of the whole of America.
During the Games, over 850,000 people visited The Rocks; the city’s historic area, close to Circular Quay. This was almost double the number of people (452,000) who visited the area in the equivalent period in 1999. The Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, as landlord and manager of The Rocks precinct, undertook preparations for the additional visitors that ranged from additional garbage management, toilet facilities, signage and providing deliveries through to coordinating communications programmes, customer service training, information officer training and the production of guide books. However, according to Colleen McMahon, the Authority’s Marketing Director, “the main thing we are proud of is that the Australian spirit of friendliness, integrity, honesty and warmth came through strongly to our guests from other parts of Australia and our guests from overseas”. There were large numbers of the former as many sponsors and National Olympic Committees located their main hospitality centres in The Rocks. Stallholders in the area reported almost doubling their level of sales in the weeks of the Olympics and restaurants, cafes and pubs did very well after having experienced a slow trading period in July and early August.

Destinations outside Sydney that were hoping to attract the day excursion market found business to be very slow. Fewer buses were available to make trips to the Blue Mountains due to allocations made as part of Games commitments and those who travelled on the train were spending very little money in the area. The operator of a local outdoor adventure company reported that “people are having to spend big money in Sydney so when they up come up here, they’re looking for a cheap day out”. Attractions in the Blue Mountains reported that attendance figures in the weeks preceding the Games had also been unreasonably low. Exceptions to this pattern were caused when tours by corporate groups were organized in conjunction with meetings held in locations outside Sydney such as the Hunter Valley wine region. These were normally arranged prior to the Games by hospitality organizations contracted by these same groups.

Tourism in regional areas of Australia was 10 per cent – 15 per cent below normal visitation levels during the Games mainly due to a decline in the school holiday market. The Gold Coast market. Bob Brett, the General Manager of the Gold Coast Tourism Bureau attributed this decline to detrimental pricing and scheduling policies adopted by international airlines.

The large influx of overseas visitors to Sydney was reflected in the attendance pattern at many of the city’s attractions. Instead of attracting a mix of 60 per cent domestic and 40 per cent international visitors at Taronga Zoo, the percentages were reversed during the Games. The number of international visitors to the Aquarium, in Darling Harbour increased by 54 per cent between 17 and 30 September 2000, compared to the same weeks in 1999. However, the number of domestic visitors fell by 23 per cent at the Aquarium between the same periods.

Darling Harbour proved to be particularly popular attraction and over two million people went into the area reported almost doubling the figure for the previous year but it does not include those who went to the many cafes and restaurants that line the ground floor of the complex. An even larger rise in retail sales was achieved although a 60 million Australian dollars redevelopment had increased the amount of available retail space. The physical layout and mix of attractions at Darling Harbour presented an ideal setting for the festive activities that were organized during the Games and one of the six highly successful, “Live Sites” was located there. Large screens showed coverage of Olympic events and live entertainment was programmed at different times of the day. The entertainers at each site were themed to appeal to different audiences. The excitement of the Games became apparent. The Gold Coast experienced an increase in bookings from families with very young children. However, a downturn in tourism was largely caused by a 20 per cent – 30 per cent decline in visitors from the countries in Asia that make up a large part of the Gold Coast’s market. Bob Brett, the General Manager of the Gold Coast Tourism Bureau attributed this decline to detrimental pricing and scheduling policies adopted by international airlines.

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Olympic Games

Consequently, few Front Office and Bell Services staff were required and Reservations was very quiet. Housekeeping organised greater than normal demand but overall, the payroll was reduced during the period of the Games.

Many of the changes imposed on tourism and hospitality businesses were not unexpected as considerable work had been undertaken to prepare for the Games. As early as January 1994, the Tourism Olympic Forum was established under the direction of Tourism New South Wales. Major industry organisations were represented on the Forum which sought to improve collaboration between all sectors of the industry involved in planning for the Games. It also proved to be an invaluable way for information to be communicated between the Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) and the larger number of tourism organisations that had a critical role to play in ensuring that all elements of the Olympic city would function effectively. The Forum met quarterly with a number of sub-committees working to resolve issues under the headings of Visitor Information, Visitor Attractions, Regional Dispersion, Retail/Shopping and Media Services. A major initiative of the Media group was to lobby for the establishment of a media centre for non-accredited journalists, who were registered at the media centre that was developed near Darling Harbour.

The Tourism Olympic Forum also commissioned a study to examine the adequacy of the supply of accommodation in the city. It was partly the findings of this study that gave rise to the provision of extra accommodation with over 11,000 rooms entering the market between 1997 and 2000. Some of the new rooms were in hotels built as part of renovations to landmark sites. They included the 418-room, five-star Westin Hotel in the former GPO building in Martin Place and the 302-room, five-star Market Hotel in the former Grace Brothers building. Many other projects were stimulated by deadlines associated with the Games. Two new terminals were completed at the airport, an underground train line was built to link the airport with the city and Sydney City Council spent A$520 million upgrading footpaths, rebuilding squares and restoring parks.

One of the major beneficiaries of the investment made for the Olympics is likely to be the Convention sector. Although many of Sydney's major venues were unavailable for two months over the Olympic period, the city still attracted 46 major international meetings in 2000, making it the number one convention city in the world. The city's ability to host conventions, exhibitions and special events, has been strengthened by many of the developments built to help stage the Games. These include the A$57 million expansion of the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre at Darling Harbour that has helped so many to achieve their goals and become a major highlight for the Games. The city's ability to host conventions, exhibitions and special events, has been strengthened by many of the developments built to help stage the Games. These include the A$57 million expansion of the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre at Darling Harbour that has helped so many to achieve their goals and become a major highlight for the Games.

A heightened level of interest in the city from the world's media had been created by the Games and in 1999 and 2000 more than 3,000 media were brought to Australia under the programme, generating almost A$23 billion worth of publicity about Australia as a tourist destination. Opportunities to work with major broadcasters were pursued, particularly Olympic rights holders such as NBC in the United States of America, Globo in Brazil and China's CCTV. Assistance was provided to develop programme ideas that provided opportunities to profile Australian lifestyles and to expand the media's horizons to regions throughout the country. Collaboration with Olympic sponsors was a particu-
Olympic Games

Australians abroad

The multi-year promotional activity by Visa was based on the tenet that substantial results can be achieved from marketing before the Games begin. Visa's substantial preparations for the Sydney Olympics began in 1997 when it formed a destination marketing consortium with the Australian Tourist Commission, the Sydney Convention and Visitor Bureau and Tourism New South Wales. The partnership resulted in more than US$40 million in marketing value for Australia and included special travel offers for card holders as well as a three year global promotional campaign using the designation "Australia Prefers Visa". Visa's activities during the Games included the operation of Visitor Centres at the airport and in the city and special promotions that featured Olympic pin give-aways. More than 500 key retailers participated in Visa's "Embrace the Spirit" campaign that was designed to drive business into the shops. A hospitality programme for over 1,200 guests provided an opportunity to reward employees and to cement relationships with representatives of member banks that had participated in pre-Games promotions. Visa’s sponsorship success helped produce an increase of 25% in card usage by overseas visitors to Australia in 1999 and, during the Games, transaction levels at official Olympic sites surpassed those recorded by Visa at the Atlanta Games. At Olympic Park, A$20 million was spent on Visa cards at point of sale transactions and more than A$85 million was withdrawn from Visa ATMs. The significance of the relationship between Visa and the tourism industry was summed by the Managing Director of the ATO who stated that it had provided "Australia with sensational exposure and an invaluable boost to the ATO’s international promotional activities. This has delivered enormous benefits for the Australian tourism industry and provided Visa with an effective channel to leverage its Olympic sponsorship". The importance of the Sydney Olympics for tourism has given rise to a series of studies by the Collaborative Research Centre (CRC) for Sustainable Tourism which is funded by the Federal Government. The three main projects seek to measure the effect of the Games on international visitation patterns to Australia, to learn more about the impact of the sponsor guest market and to measure the effectiveness of leveraging strategies employed by tourism organizations and regions around Australia. The research is being conducted by academics based at two universities in New South Wales; Southern Cross University and the University of New South Wales, Griffith University in Queensland and Victoria University in Melbourne. It is hoped that the findings will be of value to other host nations that wish to maximize tourism opportunities presented by the Olympic Games.

*Associate Professor, School of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Southern Cross University, Lismore (Australia).

Bulgaria

The National Sports Academy of Bulgaria has conferred the title "Doctor Honoris Causa" to Ivan Slavkov, IOC member, president of the NOC and of the Bulgarian Football Union, in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the development and management of sports and Olympism. The ceremony was held in the aula of the National Sports Academy in Sofia in the presence of numerous sports officials, sports scientists, Olympian champions, personalities from politics and culture, among them the Chairman of the State Agency for Youth and Sports, Simon Spassov.